

Ardussi Family



he Ardussi name came from a family that lived in Pinerola, Italy. John Ardussi was born on May 11, 1868. He was orphaned at age 3 when his father died from blood poisoning. John served in the Italian army. There was a depression in Europe at the time and he was advised that he had very little future in Italy.

At the age of 28, John came to the United States where two brothers, Charles and Constance, as well as a sister, Mary, were already settled. They helped John by paying for his travel expenses to the States. After landing at Ellis Island, John took a train through Canada to Detroit. He went to work for his brothers in their saloon/restaurant as a bartender.

Catharina Barbara Sophia Zehnder was born August 23, 1878 to Johann Friedrich and Anna Barbara nee List Zehnder. Sophie, as she was called, and her friend Kate Roller, attended a wedding in Detroit. After the wedding, they decided to look for a job at the employment bureau. While they were there, Charles Ardussi came in and said he needed help at his restaurant, the Garibaldi. The girls accepted, and boarded with Sophie's brother, Carl, a teacher at Emmanuel Lutheran School.

In October 1896, Sophie and Kate returned to Frankenmuth with the news that they wanted to get married to John and Constance Ardussi. This was shocking news . . . girls from prominent Lutheran families in a predominantly Lutheran community marrying Italians of the Catholic faith.

Sophie Zehnder married John Ardussi in St. Lorenz Lutheran Church September 19, 1897. This was the first English marriage ceremony conducted by Rev. E.A. Mayer. Kate Roller married Constance Ardussi on October 5, 1897.

In 1899, John and Sophie Ardussi moved to Frankenmuth and purchased Martin Zucker's tavern. They opened a restaurant and served excellent chicken dinners. John had expertise in serving mixed drinks, something new to the Frankenmuth people, who were used to drinking only beer. The couple's reputation spread and the wealthy residents of Saginaw and Flint came to dine at "Ardussi's".

In 1904, John was persuaded to move to Saginaw to run the newly formed Saginaw Country Club. From there they went to the Saginaw Canoe Club, where John became the chef. He was widely known for his culinary ability-especially his Italian spaghetti. John was active in the Italian Society, holding various offices, and was also in the Pit and Balcony drama organization. He was a member of Holy Cross Lutheran Church and its Men's Club. The Ardussi's invested their money in 10 acres of land along Gratiot Avenue in Saginaw. Later when the area was subdivided, the street down the middle was named Ardussi Avenue. John and Sophie were good to her brother William and his family. In addition to lending them money, Sophie trained William's daughters to be good waitresses and gracious hostesses. That experience paid off later when William's family began their own restaurant, "Zehnder's".

John and Sophie had three children: 1) John Ardurino Ardussi was born February 27, 1905. John married Ethel Wilkinson on August 2, 1934. They had 3 children: Mary, Margaret, and John. 2) Wallace Francis Ardussi was born May 11, 1906. Wallace married Faith Farmer on June 25, 1932. They had 3 children: Wallace Phillip, John August, and Steve Zehnder. 3) Lolitta Ardussi was born April 23, 1914. Lolitta married Edward Rigge of Saginaw.

John Ardussi died in October 1938 and Sophie Zehnder Ardussi died in July 1959.



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